

# Ambrose the Appropriator: Borrowed Texts in a New Context in the Commentary on Luke

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*Document Version*

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

*Citation for published version (Harvard):*

Griffith, SB 2016, Ambrose the Appropriator: Borrowed Texts in a New Context in the Commentary on Luke. in *Commentaries, Catenae and Biblical Tradition*. Texts and Studies, no. 13, vol. 3, Gorgias, Piscataway, NJ, pp. 199–226. <[http://gorgiaspress.com/bookshop/t-openaccess\\_repository.aspx](http://gorgiaspress.com/bookshop/t-openaccess_repository.aspx)>

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## 10. AMBROSE THE APPROPRIATOR: BORROWED TEXTS IN A NEW CONTEXT IN THE *COMMENTARY ON LUKE*

SUSAN B. GRIFFITH<sup>1</sup>

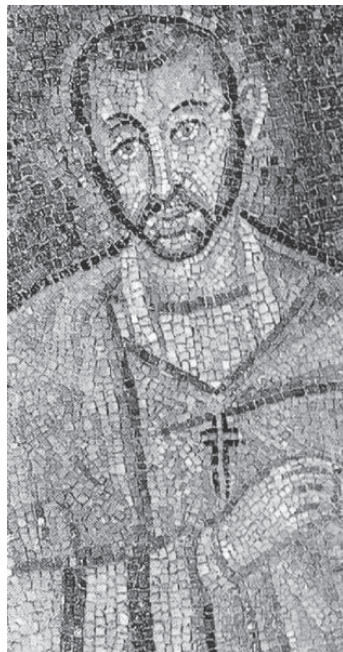
### TWO VIEWS OF AMBROSE

Two views circulated during his lifetime about Ambrose, the fourth-century bishop of Milan, and to a certain extent they persist to this day. Heralded in his city and beyond as a skilled yet accessible orator, as well as a sophisticated politician, Ambrose had many keen admirers, most notably Augustine. In this perspective, he is the clear-voiced preacher and teacher, the epitome of Roman civic duty: first in a governmental position, following in the footsteps of his father who served as a Roman governor in Trier, where Ambrose was born; and then drafted against his will, and prior to his baptism, to put those gifts to use in the Church. In one of the basilicas he founded in Milan, in which his remains still lie on display in pontifical vestments, the mosaic of the reluctant bishop offers a physical likeness completed after his death but almost certainly based on a portrait completed within his lifetime (Image 1). Here he stands clad in the simple but elegant white folds of a long Roman dalmatic tunic with *clavi*, partially covered by a golden tan cloak; his face is slim, slightly weary, with sober, deep-set eyes and jug ears. Augustine paints a similar portrait in the *Confessions*: articulate, wise, slightly but not overly ascetic, an expositor of Scripture who won him over with his exegetical insight, refined but restrained rhetoric, and example of holy living.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The research leading to these results has received funding from the European Union Seventh Framework Programme (FP7/2007-2013) under grant agreement no. 283302 (COMPAUL).

<sup>2</sup> Augustine, *Confessions*, 5.13–14 (23–5) and 6.4 (6).



**Image 1. Mosaic of Ambrose**

Mosaic of Ambrose in the Chapel of San Vittore, Basilica Sant'Ambrogio in Milan.<sup>3</sup>

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(Source: Wikimedia Commons).

Jerome, on the other hand, accused Ambrose more than once of being a literary thief, whose work was highly derivative and inferior. In Jerome's descriptions the Bishop of Milan appears as a serial plagiarist who never had an original thought, stealing shamelessly from the writings of others, too lazy to do his own work and too arrogant to credit his sources:

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<sup>3</sup> The Chapel of San Vittore originated as a shrine to St Victor prior to Ambrose's episcopate and the building of the basilica, but was later supplied with a more permanent superstructure and mosaics and attached to the Basilica Sant'Ambrogio (formerly Basilica Martyrum). Foletti provides a summary of the various options for the dating of the mosaic and narrows the range to 490–512, during the episcopacy of Lawrence I (Ivan Foletti, 'Physiognomic representations as a rhetorical instrument: "portraits" in San Vittore in Ciel d'Oro, the Galla Placidia "mausoleum" and San Paolo Fuori le Mura' in *The Face of the Dead and the Early Christian World*, ed. Ivan Foletti and Alžběta Filipová. Rome: Viella, 2013, 61–6). The mosaic shows Ambrose dressed as a layperson in civil service, which has led to the hypothesis that it is based on a very early portrait. Even if it merges Ambrose's actual appearance with the stereotypical features of portraits of philosophers, this became the iconographic prototype for later images of the bishop.

*Certe qui hunc legerit latinorum furta cognoscet, et contemnet riuulos cum coeperit haurire de fontibus.*<sup>4</sup>

Whoever reads this [Ambrose's work] will certainly recognise the 'thefts of the Latins' and will despise his dribbling rivulet once they drink from its fountainhead.

In this case, the fountain from which Ambrose's *De spiritu sancto* flows as but a little gutter is Didymus the Blind's treatise on the Holy Spirit; the above observation in the prologue to Jerome's later translation of Didymus serves as a piece of self-promotion. In the same prologue, Jerome compares an author, unnamed but transparently Ambrose, to an ugly jackdaw (*informis cornicula*) who steals the bright plumage of other birds to brighten up his drab, black feathers, and struts around as if they were his own.<sup>5</sup> Jerome goes on to denigrate this anonymous writer's 'little books' with an epigram of Terence: *ex graecis bonis latina uidi non bona*.<sup>6</sup> Ambrose's *libelli* have, in Jerome's opinion, no real 'manliness' of expression but instead only pretty makeup.<sup>7</sup> In another preface, this time to his translation of Origen's *Homilies on Luke*, Jerome deploys a similar avian image:

*cum a sinistro oscinem coruum audiam crocitantem et mirum in modum de cunctarum animum ridere coloribus, cum totus ipse tenebrosus sit.*<sup>8</sup>

On my left I hear an ominous crow cawing; in remarkable fashion it gleams with the coloured feathers of all the birds, although the bird itself is black as night.

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<sup>4</sup> Jerome, *Prologue to Didymus the Blind's De spiritu sancto*, 31–3 (Louis Doutreleau, ed., *Didyme l'Aveugle, Traité du Saint-Esprit*. SC 386. Paris: Cerf, 1992, 140). A more recent edition with German translation is based on Doutreleau's text: Hermann Josef Sieben, ed. and trans., *Didymus der Blinde. De Spiritu Sancto. Über den Heiligen Geist*. Fontes Christiani 78. Turnhout: Brepols, 2004.

<sup>5</sup> Jerome, *Prologue to Didymus*, 19–21.

<sup>6</sup> *qui bene uortendo et easdem scribendo male ex Graecis bonis Latinas fecit non bonas* (Terence, *Eunuchus*, prologus 7–8; John Barsby, ed., *Terence, Eunuchus*. Cambridge: CUP, 1999).

<sup>7</sup> Jerome, *Prologue to Didymus*, 22–7.

<sup>8</sup> Jerome, *Prologus in omilias Origenis super Lucam euangelistam* 1.16; Max Rauer, ed., *Origenes Werke IX. Die Homilien zu Lukas in der Übersetzung des Hieronymus und die griechischen Reste der Homilien und des Lukas-Kommentars*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. GCS 49. Berlin: Akademie, 1959). Translation from Joseph T. Lienhard, trans., *Origen, Homilies on Luke; Fragments on Luke*. Fathers of the Church 94. Washington DC: CUA, 1996, 4.

Jerome never names Ambrose in his derogatory remarks, but the connection would have been obvious to his readers.<sup>9</sup> It was made unambiguous by Rufinus: in his *Apologia* against Jerome, Rufinus explains that this invective imagery, drawn from a tale of Aesop—or possibly, rather ironically, Horace’s reframing of it—was aimed at Ambrose.<sup>10</sup> Rufinus takes Jerome to task over this slander. He admits that Ambrose may have borrowed, emphasising the catholicity shared by the Greek and Latin churches. Nevertheless, Rufinus does not see this to be as troublesome as Jerome’s unfairness towards Ambrose in choosing ‘to blaze abroad what you call his plagiarisms [*furta illius*]’, adding:

*qui fortassis etiam necessitatem scribendi passus est, ut insanientibus tunc haereticis responderet?*<sup>11</sup>

who quite possibly was undergoing a pressing need in order to reply right then to some heretical ravings.

The pressures and flux of Ambrose’s context, as a Catholic bishop standing against Milan’s Arian imperial court and clergy, could excuse a solution of expediency. Further, Rufinus points out Jerome’s own habit of uncredited borrowing in his writings—a case of the raven calling the crow black.<sup>12</sup> Why would Jerome persist in such a line of attack? Layton connects this string of invectives to Jerome’s insecurity over maintaining his status and financial support in the patronage system.<sup>13</sup> Yet Jerome’s opinion has over time been folded into the common assessment of Ambrose’s contribution, or lack thereof, to theological development.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>9</sup> In *De uiris illustribus* 124, Jerome thinly veils his negative criticism by stating that he would refrain from comment because Ambrose was still writing.

<sup>10</sup> Rufinus, *Apologia* 2.25–8 (Manlio Simonetti, ed., *Tyrannii Rufini Opera*. CCL 20. Turnhout: Brepols, 1961, 101–5); in the English translation of Fremantle, it is 2.22–5 (Henry Fremantle, trans., *Theodoret, Jerome, Gennadius, Rufinus*. Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers 2.3. Oxford and New York: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1892, 471). Layton makes no mention of Aesop, focussing instead on Horace (*Epistula* 1.3.18) as the source for the image (Richard A. Layton, ‘Plagiarism and Lay Patronage of Ascetic Scholarship: Jerome, Ambrose and Rufinus.’ *J ECS* 10.4 (2002) 489–522, here 505–6).

<sup>11</sup> Rufinus, *Apologia* 2.28.10–16.

<sup>12</sup> Rufinus, *Apologia*, 2.28.19ff.

<sup>13</sup> Layton, ‘Plagiarism’, especially 489, 503, 520–1.

<sup>14</sup> As seen, for example, in the classic two-volume biography of Homes Dudden which represented the consensus for much of the twentieth century (F.

## TEXTS AND CONTEXTS

These conflicting portraits come to mind when reading Ambrose's commentary on Luke, the *Expositio euangelii secundum Lucam*.<sup>15</sup> This and the *Homilies on Luke* of Origen (surviving primarily in the Latin translation by Jerome and secondarily in Greek fragments) are virtually the only significant surviving exegetical works on Luke from the patristic period, which overall favoured Matthew and John as the gospel accounts most frequently accorded sustained commentary.<sup>16</sup> The Bishop of Milan writes with fluidity in rhetorically polished but not overly elaborate Latin. Yet echoes and even verbatim translations from other exegetical works on the Gospel of Luke can be identified. Origen's homilies, one of his main sources, were composed in Greek and unavailable in Latin until after the publication of Ambrose's commentary. Assessment of the intertextuality of Ambrose's Latin text thus depends on fragmentary Greek evidence from Origen's *Homilies* and Jerome's later translation of that lost collection.<sup>17</sup>

Origen preached his homilies on Luke some time between 233 and 244 in Caesarea.<sup>18</sup> Copies of the texts, taken down by *notarii*, were available

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Homes Dudden, *The Life and Times of St. Ambrose*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1935; e.g. 455).

<sup>15</sup> Ambrose, *Expositio euangelii secundum Lucam; Fragmenta in Esaïam* (M. Adriaen, ed., *Sancti Ambrosii Mediolanensis Opera IV*. CCSL 14. Turnhout: Brepols, 1957; see also PL 15.1527–1850; Karl Schenkl, ed., *Expositio euangelii secundum Lucam*. CSEL 32.4. Vienna: Tempsky, 1902; Gabriel Tissot, ed., *Traité sur l'Évangile de S. Luc*. SC 45 & 52. Paris: Cerf, 1956, 1958). A recent English translation is Íde M. Ní Riain, *Commentary of Saint Ambrose on the Gospel according to Saint Luke*. Dublin: Halcyon, 2001.

<sup>16</sup> Apart from a few fragments, the only other principal exegetical work to survive on Luke is a Syriac translation of Cyril of Alexandria's Lucan homilies. See Lienhard, *Origen, Homilies on Luke*, xxiv.

<sup>17</sup> The present discussion relies on Rauer, *Origenes Werke IX*, although Rauer's first edition (Leipzig, 1930) was also consulted; see also Hermann Josef Sieben, ed. and trans., *Origenes. Homilien zum Lukasevangelium*. 2 vols. Fontes Christiani 4. Freiburg: Herder, 1991–2, and Henri Crouzel, François Fournier, Pierre Périchon, ed. and trans., *Origène, Homélie sur S. Luc*. SC 87. Paris: Cerf, 1962. Both these translations use Rauer's text.

<sup>18</sup> Lienhard postulates that the homilies date from c. 233–44, after Origen's move to Caesarea and before his commentary on Matthew (*Origen, Homilies on Luke*, xxiv); Rauer suggests 231–44, though favouring the earlier part of that timeframe (*Origenes Werke IX*, viii); François Fournier and Sieben both date the initial preaching to 233–4, 'at the start of his second stay in Caesarea' (Crouzel et al.,

in the famous library of Caesarea.<sup>19</sup> Intriguingly, these homilies contain the first treatment of the account of the Nativity prior to Hilary of Poitiers in the fourth century. Unfortunately, only a few Greek fragments remain and many of these are transmitted in catenae, which makes them difficult to use.<sup>20</sup> The whole work is available in Latin through Jerome's translation, a collection of thirty-nine homilies completed around 389–90.<sup>21</sup> Rauer's edition includes Jerome's text, the Greek catena fragments which correspond most closely to this, and other fragments of Lucan exegesis: the last of these could come from Origen's lost *Commentary on Luke* rather than the *Homilies*, or be spurious.

The exegetical connection between Origen and Ambrose is well known. While Ambrose was not the only Church Father who found Origen's biblical interpretation useful, it was his preaching which served as the main conduit of Alexandrian, and specifically Origenist, exegesis into the West. Approximately ten years before Jerome's translation of Origen, Ambrose preached a series of sermons on Luke in Milan in around 377–8.

Origène, *Homélies sur S. Luc*, 81); Sieben, *Origenes Homilien*, I.30–1.

<sup>19</sup> Hughes Oliphant Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church*. 2 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998, 1:321. See also Anthony Grafton and Megan Williams, *Christianity and the Transformation of the Book: Origen, Eusebius, and the Library of Caesarea*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2006, 5. Grafton and Williams cite Johannes Trithemius, *Catalogus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum*. Cologne: Peter Quentel, 1531, viii *recto*, xi *recto*, xiii *recto*.

<sup>20</sup> Sieben, *Origenes Homilien*, I.46–53 discusses briefly the complicated Greek and Latin textual traditions of Origen's Lucan homilies. The classic treatment is Max Rauer, *Form und Überlieferung der Lukas-homilien des Origenes*. TU 47.3. Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1932. Rauer attempted to catalogue all of Origen's Lucan fragments from Greek catenae in his GCS edition, which appeared two years earlier. Lienhard remains wary of the fragments due to the way in which catenae often mangled, truncated, or adapted the original text (Lienhard, *Origen, Homilies on Luke*, xxxvi). Sieben includes some but not all of Rauer's identified fragments in his edition: he renumbers them but gives details of Rauer's original numbering for reference (e.g. Sieben's Fragment 60 is Rauer's Fragment 113, on Luke 7:37; see Sieben, *Origenes Homilien*, II.442–3).

<sup>21</sup> This date is relatively secure, as it needs to be after Ambrose's commentary but before the turn against Origenism which started around 393. See J.N.D. Kelly, *Jerome: His Life, Writings, and Controversies*. London: Duckworth, 1975, 143 (esp. note 12). Sieben, however, based on a possible reference to the Massacre at Thessaloniki in Ambrose's exegesis, places both works slightly later: Ambrose's commentary in 391 and Jerome's translation of Origen in 392 (Sieben, *Origenes Homilien*, I.34, 36).



Sometime in the following decade he revised these homilies into a commentary, the *Expositio euangelii secundum Lucam*, which stands as his only extant work on the New Testament.<sup>22</sup> While evidence of his editorial hand can be discerned in places, the commentary's origin in the liturgy is never completely absent.

Some key questions remain about Origen's homilies and the source used by Jerome. How many sermons did Origen preach on Luke? Did collections with differing numbers of sermons circulate? Furthermore, how many of Origen's homilies were available to Jerome and Ambrose? It is impossible to know the exact number, but Old proposes that Origen preached well over 150 sermons in his series on Luke, covering the entire Gospel.<sup>23</sup> If that is the case, then perhaps 80% of the sermons are now missing. As far as the textual evidence goes, in addition to the missing parts of the now-fragmentary homilies surviving in Greek (some of which could be remnants of Origen's lost commentary), at least two more of Origen's Lucan sermons are known to have been lost, as he refers to them elsewhere.<sup>24</sup> The fragments that do not correspond to any part of Jerome's work, and Origen's own comments on his preaching, indicate that Jerome did not translate all of Origen's homilies on the Gospel. The sermons he does translate are drawn from Luke 1–4, followed by six further sermons on isolated passages from Luke 10–20. Whether Jerome had a complete or a partial source text, or was aware of any gaps, is unclear.<sup>25</sup> If he had a complete edition in front of him, perhaps he lost interest, or had other things to do, or believed that he could skip some sermons if their topic was covered in a commentary on Matthew or John. The one thing that seems clear is that Ambrose makes use of homilies that Jerome did not translate.

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<sup>22</sup> Lienhard, *Origen, Homilies on Luke*, xxxiv, dates the initial publication to 390–1; Rauer, *Origenes Werke IX*, x, prefers 388.

<sup>23</sup> Old, *Reading and Preaching*, I.321.

<sup>24</sup> Origen refers in his commentaries to his homilies on Luke 14:16–24 (*Commentary on John* 32.2) and 15:4–7 (*Commentary on Matthew* 13.29): see Lienhard, *Origen, Homilies on Luke*, xxxv n. 22.

<sup>25</sup> Lienhard, *Origen, Homilies on Luke*, xxv, is convinced that Jerome translated all of the homilies he had, which would indicate that some had already been lost or excluded from the corpus. Old, *Reading and Preaching*, I.322, on the other hand, thinks that Jerome intended to translate more but did not finish his work. Rauer, *Form und Überlieferung*, 40, says that the manuscript tradition is too complex to enable the question to be answered.



Furthermore, the text of Origen's sermons that Ambrose and Jerome are likely to have had before them may have been quite condensed. The main ideas would have been recorded by stenographers, but the extent to which Origen would have developed these in his spoken presentation is unknown. Old argues that, based on the length of Origen's *Homilies on Genesis*, it seems that not much more than an outline is preserved of those on Luke.<sup>26</sup> Heine, following Nautin, notes that while (in Jerome's translations) Origen's Genesis homilies are indeed three times longer than the sermons on Luke, this is due to the shorter preaching time at a Eucharist, when the Gospels would be expounded. The sermons on Genesis would have been delivered during a non-Eucharistic morning or evening service devoted to teaching the catechumenate.<sup>27</sup> The difference in the way that Jerome and Ambrose handle Origen's homilies—the former treating the text with considerable reverence and translating more rigorously, the latter using it more as an outline—may reflect their own opinions on the status of the text in the manuscript in front of them.

### THE MAIN SOURCES FOR AMBROSE'S *COMMENTARY*

Ambrose borrows ideas, scriptural references, and even word-for-word passages from a range of authors. It is noticeable, however, that he varies his sources. For example, the most frequent usage of Origen's *Homilies on Luke* occurs in Books 1 and 2 of Ambrose's *Commentary on Luke*.<sup>28</sup> In Book 3, he shifts to Eusebius, in particular the *Quaestiones euangelii*, as his main source; he also returns to Eusebius towards the end of Book 10. Scattered throughout are further echoes of Origen, including, rather significantly, portions which were not translated by Jerome but which can be identified in the catena fragments. While working with catenae presents a variety of questions about authenticity and reliability, the number of passages with a very clear parallel in either Jerome's translation or Ambrose's commentary, or both, is quite high. In addition to Origen and Eusebius, Ambrose makes use of the *Commentary on Matthew* by Hilary of Poitiers for insight into some

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<sup>26</sup> Old, *Reading and Preaching*, I.322.

<sup>27</sup> Ronald E. Heine, trans., *Origen: Homilies on Genesis and Exodus*. Fathers of the Church 71. Washington DC: CUA, 1982, 20. See also P. Nautin, *Origène: sa vie et son œuvre*. Paris: Beauchesne, 1977, 389–409.

<sup>28</sup> A useful chart listing the passages in Ambrose's Lucan commentary (based on the text of Tissot in SC 45 and 52) that borrow quite clearly from Origen can be found in Crouzel et al., *Origène, Homélies sur S. Luc*, 563–4.

of the Lucan passages that have parallels in Matthaean texts.<sup>29</sup> As noted above, commentaries on Matthew and John were more common in the period than those on Luke or Mark, and it should be no surprise that Ambrose would look in particular to a Matthaean commentary when discussing a synoptic parallel in Luke; however, this can cause some anxiety where the passages differ, as can be seen in the discussion below of the Anointing at Bethany. As a Roman-educated former consular prefect, allusions drawn from the classical canon (Virgil, Cicero, Ovid, Pliny, and even Homer) can be found scattered throughout.<sup>30</sup> Most significantly, and too often overlooked in discussions of intertextuality, Ambrose cites nearly every book of the New Testament (only 2 and 3 John are missing), and much of the Old Testament (apart from Ezra, Nehemiah, Judith, Esther, Joel, Obadiah, Nahum, 1 Maccabees).<sup>31</sup> The most frequent citations, apart from Luke, are drawn from Matthew (as the closest parallel gospel), John, and Psalms—the last as a rich source of Christological interpretation for the early Church.

### A COMPARISON WITH INTERTEXTUALITY IN AMBROSE'S *EXPLANATIO PSALMORUM XII*

What was Ambrose's *modus operandi* for composing a commentary? By way of comparison, I will summarise briefly his method in his commentary on twelve of the Psalms.<sup>32</sup> In these, Ambrose borrowed frequently from the Psalm homilies of Basil of Caesarea, although there are only four psalms which they both expound: Psalms 1, 45, 48 and 61.<sup>33</sup> Perhaps Ambrose would have included others, but he died in 397 in the midst of writing his commentary on Psalm 43.<sup>34</sup> For the four Psalms on which the two Fathers

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<sup>29</sup> Jean Doignon, ed., *Hilaire de Poitiers sur Matthieu*. SC 254, 258. Paris: Cerf, 1978–9.

<sup>30</sup> A list of non-scriptural sources (both classical and Christian) and later re-use of Ambrose's homilies can be found in Adriaen, *Sancti Ambrosi Mediolanensis Opera IV*, 435–40.

<sup>31</sup> Adriaen, *Sancti Ambrosi Mediolanensis Opera IV*, 409–34.

<sup>32</sup> Michael Petschenig and Michaela Zelzer, ed., *Sancti Ambrosi opera. Pars VI. Explanatio psalmorum XII*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. CSEL 64. Vienna: ÖAW, 1999. Ambrose also composed a separate commentary on Psalm 118 (119).

<sup>33</sup> Thirteen of Basil's psalm homilies are contained in PG 29, and another four that are dubious or spurious are in the Appendix to PG 30. No modern critical edition has been produced.

<sup>34</sup> There is no evidence that Ambrose intended to expound every Psalm,

both comment, Basil's homilies provide a framework for Ambrose's thought and, specifically, a number of references to related scriptural passages. In places, Ambrose translates Basil directly, which indicates that he had Basil's text open while he was writing or dictating. In sections 1–29 of Ambrose's exegesis of Psalm 1, there are over forty direct parallels with Basil's homily on the same Psalm. Some are paraphrases, but many are translations that correspond closely to the source. What sparked Jerome's accusations of plagiarism was the lack of references to Basil as the source of these obvious borrowings. Such an omission, however, is not without precedent in late antiquity, particularly when translation is involved.<sup>35</sup> On the other hand, providing the source's name was not an unknown practice, although the wrong author may have been cited occasionally by writers relying on memory. Accusations of plagiarism tend to arise in polemical contexts, for example as an apologetic strategy in which pagan philosophers are declared to have taken their ideas from Moses. While Ambrose does appropriate elements of Basil's structure for the exegesis of those four Psalms, as well as citing some of the same biblical texts and even translating some passages verbatim, he nonetheless goes far beyond Basil. First, Ambrose cites scripture far more frequently. He may use some of the same biblical texts as Basil to illuminate the verse under consideration, but he then adds even more. Second, Ambrose has more rhetorical flourishes, including more elaborate figurative language, drawing from different categories. Where Basil opts for a metaphor from nature, Ambrose may replace it by a military or athletic one. Third, he covers far more ground than Basil. In the case of Psalm 1, Basil limits his exegesis to the first verse; Ambrose comments on the entire Psalm. Finally, Ambrose's commentary differs markedly in tone, with more emphasis on paraenesis and moral application.

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although this gargantuan task was undertaken by Augustine in the following two decades.

<sup>35</sup> The idea of plagiarism was well known in antiquity, but lacked a specific term. It is generally referred to simply as 'theft' (*furtum* or κλοπή). Clement of Alexandria, in *Stromata* VI, cites a Hellenistic pagan treatise *On Plagiarism* (Περὶ κλοπῆς—literally, 'On Theft'), which probably dates from some time after the third century BCE. This connection is mentioned in Miguel Herrero de Jáuregui, *Orphism and Christianity in Late Antiquity*. Sozomena 7. Berlin & New York: de Gruyter, 2010, 201. In general, see further Layton, *Plagiarism and Lay Patronage*, and Scott McGill, *Plagiarism in Latin Literature*. Cambridge: CUP, 2012.

### INTERTEXTUALITY IN AMBROSE'S *COMMENTARY ON LUKE*

To what extent does Ambrose's approach to his sources for his Psalm commentary correspond to his exegetical process in the *Commentary on Luke*? Again, his method appears to be somewhat eclectic, relying on a single main author in some passages (typically either Origen or Hilary), cherry-picking from a range of sources in others, and developing his own interpretations. This will be illustrated from two different passages. The opening discussion of Luke 1:1 in the fragmentary material of Origen, in Jerome's translation and in Ambrose's commentary offers numerous comparisons, while a shorter, briefer sample from Luke 7:37–50 (the Anointing at Bethany) will focus on the narrative, the variation in the interpretation of this pericope between Ambrose's two main sources (Origen and Hilary), and the way in which he attempts to resolve the apparent inconsistencies.

#### Luke 1:1

The table below consists of the discussion of Luke 1:1 from Jerome's translation of Origen, the Greek text of Origen reconstructed from fragments by Rauer, and Ambrose. The parallel sections are numbered according to the order in which they appear in Ambrose's text. Bold typeface is used to help differentiate between sections and to connect the parallels with one another. A double slash (//) marks the boundaries between the Greek fragments.

Ambrose, <i>Exp. Luc.</i>	Origen, <i>Fragments in Luke</i> <sup>36</sup>	Origen, <i>Hom. Luc.</i> (via Jerome)
(1.1–4; CCSL 14.6–8)	( <i>Hom.</i> 1; GCS 49.3–6)	( <i>Hom.</i> 1; GCS 49.3–6)
[Lemma text:] 'quoniam' inquit 'multi	Ἐπειδὴ ὑπέρογκον ἦν τὸ ἐπιχείρημα ἀνθρώπων ὄντα θεοῦ διδασκαλίαν	

<sup>36</sup> The texts in square brackets in this section are taken from catena fragments as catalogued and edited by Rauer. Fragments 1a, 1b, 1c, and 2 were presented alongside the other fragments in the 1930 edition, but removed to an appendix of doubtful evidence in the second edition of 1959. Some may derive from Origen's *Commentary on Luke* rather than the homilies. For simplicity, textual variants are omitted from this table, although they are presented in the critical apparatus of the editions.

<p>conati sunt ordinare narrationem rerum.’</p> <p>pleraque nostrorum <b>(1) quemadmodum ueterum Iudaeorum</b> paribus et generibus formantur et causis atque exemplorum similium pari usu exitu que conueniunt principio que rerum et fine concordant. nam sicut multi in illo populo diuino infusi spiritu prophetarunt, <b>(1) alii autem prophetare se pollicebantur</b> et professionem destituebant mendacio <b>(1) erant enim pseudoprophetae</b> potius quam prophetae, sicut Ananias filius Azot, <b>(2) erat autem populi gratia discernere spiritus</b>, ut cognosceret quos referre deberet in numerum prophetarum, quos autem <b>(3) quasi bonus</b></p>	<p>καὶ ῥήματα συγγράφειν, εἰκότως ἀπολογεῖται ἐν τῷ προοιμίῳ. (Catena Frag. 1a, Rauer 227).]<sup>37</sup></p> <p><b>(1) Ὡςπερ ἐν τῷ πάλαι λαῷ πολλοὶ προφητεῖαν ἐπηγγέλλοντο, ἀλλὰ τούτων τινὲς μὲν ἦσαν ψευδοπροφηταί, τινὲς δὲ ἀληθῶς προφηταί,</b></p> <p><b>(2) καὶ ἦν χάρισμα τῷ λαῷ διάκρισις πνευμάτων,</b> ἀφ’ οὗ ἐκρίνετο ὁ τε ἀληθὴς προφήτης καὶ ὁ ψευδώνυμος. //</p> <p><b>(4) οὕτω καὶ νῦν ἐν τῇ καινῇ διαθήκῃ τὰ εὐαγγέλια πολλοὶ ἠθέλησαν γράψαι, ἀλλ’</b></p> <p><b>(3) οἱ δόκιμοι τραπεζῖται οὐ πάντα ἐνέκριναν, ἀλλὰ τινα αὐτῶν ἐξελέξαντο. //</b></p>	<p><b>(1) Sicut olim in populo Iudaeorum multi prophetiam pollicebantur, et quidam erant pseudoprophetae – e quibus unus fuit Ananias, filius Azor – alii uero ueri prophetae, et</b> <b>(2) erat gratia in populo discernendorum spirituum,</b> per quam alii inter prophetas recipiebantur, <b>(3) nonnulli quasi ab exercitatissimis trapezitis</b> reprobabantur, <b>(4) ita et nunc in nouo instrumento multi conati sunt scribere euangelia,</b> sed non omnes recepti. Et ut sciatis non solum quatuor euangelia, sed plurima esse conscripta, e</p>
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<sup>37</sup> This fragment does not seem to have a correspondence with either Latin version, apart perhaps from Jerome’s own apology in his prologue about how difficult an undertaking translation can be (Rauer, *Origenes Werke* IX, 1). Ambrose’s more academic prologue focuses on the different genres of scripture.

<p><b>nummularius</b>  <b>inprobare</b>, in quibus materia magis corrupta sorderet quam ueri splendor luminis resultaret  (4) sic et nunc in nouo testamento multi euangelia <i>scribere conati sunt</i>,  (3) quae <i>boni nummularii</i> non probarunt,  (5) unum autem tantummodo in quattuor libros digestum ex omnibus arbitrati sunt eligendum.  (6) et aliud quidem fertur euangelium, quod duodecim scripsisse dicantur. Ausus etiam Basilides euangelium scribere, quod dicitur secundum Basilidem. fertur etiam aliud euangelium, quod scribitur secundum Thomam. noui aliud scriptum secundum Matthiam.  (7) legimus aliqua, ne legantur, legimus, ne ignoremus, legimus, non ut teneamus, sed ut repudiemus et ut sciamus qualia sint in quibus magnifici isti cor exaltant suum.</p>	<p>(10) Τάχα δὲ καὶ τὸ ἐπεχείρησαν λεληθυῖαν ἔχει κατηγορίαν τῶν χωρὶς χαρίσματος ἐλθόντων ἐπὶ τὴν ἀναγραφὴν τῶν εὐαγγελίων.</p> <p>(13) Ματθαῖος γὰρ οὐκ ἐπεχείρησεω, ἀλλ' ἔγραψεν ἀπὸ ἀγίου πνεύματος, ὁμοίως καὶ Μᾶρκος καὶ Ἰωάννης, παραπλησίως δὲ καὶ Λουκᾶς. //</p> <p>[ὁ τὸ παρὸν εὐαγγέλιον συγγραψάμενος, προτραπείς παρὰ τοῦ κορυφαίου Πέτρου· ὥστε σημαίνει τὸ ἐπεχείρησαν τὸ χωρὶς χαρίσματος ἐλθεῖν &lt;ἐπὶ&gt; τὴν ἀναγραφὴν τῶν εὐαγγελίων τινάς, τὸ δὲ ἀνατάξασθαι σημαίνει τὸ ἐκθεῖναι, τὸ ἐξηγήσασθαι, τὸ συγγράψαι. (Catena Frag. 2, Rauer 227).]</p> <p>//</p> <p>(6) Τὸ μέντοι ἐπιγεγραμμένον κατὰ Αἰγυπτίους εὐαγγέλιον καὶ τὸ ἐπιγεγραμμένον τῶν</p>	<p>quibus haec, quae habemus, electa sunt et tradita ecclesiis, ex ipso prooemio Lucae quod ita contextitur cognoscamus: <i>quoniam quidem multi conati sunt ordinare narrationem.</i>  (10) Hoc quod ait; <i>conati sunt</i>, latentem habet accusationem eorum, qui absque gratia Spiritus sancti ad scribenda euangelia prosiluerunt.  (13) Matthaeus quippe et Marcus et Ioannes et Lucas non sunt <i>conati</i> scribere, sed Spiritu sancto pleni scripserunt euangelia. <i>Multi igitur conati sunt ordinare narrationem de his rebus, quae manifestissime cognitae sunt in nobis.</i>  (5) Ecclesia quatuor habet euangelia,  (9) haeresis plurima,  (6) e quibus quoddam scribitur secundum Aegyptios, aliud iuxta Duodecim Apostolos. Ausus fuit et Basilides</p>
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<p>(8) sed ecclesia, cum quattuor euangelii libros habeat, per uniuersum mundum euangelistis redundat;</p> <p>(9) haereses, cum multa habeant, unum non habent;</p> <p>(10) <i>multi</i> enim <i>conati</i>, sed dei gratia destituti sunt. plerique etiam ex quattuor euangelii libris in unum ea quae uenenatis putauerunt adsertionibus conuenientia referserunt. ita ecclesia quae unum euangelium habet unum deum docet; illi autem qui alium deum ueteris testamenti, alium noui adserunt, ex multis euangeliiis non unum deum, sed plures fecerunt.</p> <p><i>quoniam multi</i> inquit <i>conati sunt</i>. conati utique illi sunt qui implere nequuerunt. ergo multos coepisse nec inplesse etiam</p> <p>(11) sanctus Lucas testimonio locupletiore testatur dicens plurimos esse conatos. qui enim conatus est ordinare suo labore conatus est nec inpleuit.</p> <p>(12) <i>sine conatu sunt enim donationes et</i></p>	<p>Δώδεκα εὐαγγέλιον οἱ συγγράψαντες ἐπεχείρησαν· Ἡδὲ δὲ ἐτόλμησε καὶ Βασιλείδης γράψαι κατὰ Βασιλείδην εὐαγγέλιον. Πολλοὶ μὲν οὖν ἐπεχείρησαν· //</p> <p>φέρεται γὰρ καὶ τὸ κατὰ Θωμᾶν εὐαγγέλιον καὶ τὸ κατὰ Ματθαίαν καὶ ἄλλα πλείονα. //</p> <p>Ταῦτά ἐστι τῶν ἐπιχειρησάντων·</p> <p>(8) τὰ δὲ τέσσαρα μόνα προκρίνει ἡ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐκκλησία. //</p> <p>[ἀνατάξασθαι ἀντὶ τοῦ συντάξαι γραφῇ καὶ φανερώσαι τὸν λόγον (Catena Frag. 3, Rauer 227).]</p> <p>(11) Ὁ γε μὴν Λουκᾶς εἰπὼν· περὶ τῶν πεπληροφορημένων ἐν ἡμῖν πραγμάτων τὴν διάθεσιν ἑαυτοῦ ἐμφανίζει,</p> <p>[11.1] ὅτι οὐδὲν ἀμφιβάλλον οὐδὲ εἰκάζων, ἀλλὰ πάντα μετὰ παρρησίας ἐβεβαίωσεν ὡς εὖ</p>	<p>scribere euangelium et suo illud nomine titolare. <i>Multi conati sunt</i> scribere,</p> <p>(5) sed quattuor tantum euangelia sunt probata, e quibus sub persona Domini et Saluatoris nostri proferenda sunt dogmata.</p> <p>(6) Scio quoddam euangelium, quod appellatur secundum Thomam, et iuxta Mathiam;</p> <p>(7) et alia plura legimus, ne quid ignorare uideremur propter eos, qui se putant aliquid scire, si ista cognouerint.</p> <p>(5) Sed in his omnibus nihil aliud probamus nisi quod ecclesia, id est quattuor tantum euangelia recipienda. Haec idcirco, quia in principio lectum est: <i>multi conati sunt ordinare narrationem de his rebus, quae confirmatae sunt in nobis</i>. Illi tentauerunt atque <i>conati sunt</i> de his rebus scribere, quae nobis manifestissime sunt compertae.</p>
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<p>gratia dei, quae, ubi se infuderit, rigare consuevit, ut non egeat, sed redundet scriptoris ingenium. (13) non conatus est Matthaeus, non conatus est Marcus, non conatus est Iohannes, non conatus est Lucas, sed diuino spiritu ubertatem dictorum rerum quae omnium ministrante sine ullo molimine coepta conplerunt. (10) et ideo bene dicit: quoniam multi conati sunt ordinare narrationem rerum quae in nobis conpletae sunt uel quae in nobis redundant. quod enim redundat nulli deficit et de completo nemo dubitat, cum fidem effectus adstruat, exitus prodat. (11) itaque euangelium completum est et redundat omnibus per uniuersum orbem fidelibus et mentes omnium rigat animum (14) quae confirmat. ergo fundatus in petra et qui omnem fidei sumserit plenitudinem firmamentum quae constantiae recte dicit:</p>	<p>εἰδώς. Πεπληροφόρητο γὰρ καὶ ἐν οὐδενὶ ἐδίσταζεν, πότερον οὕτως ἔχει ἢ οὐ. Τοῦτο δὲ γίνεται περὶ τοὺς βεβαίως πιστεύοντας καὶ εὐχομένους καὶ ἐπιτυχόντας καὶ εἰπόντας· βεβαίως σὸν με ἐν τοῖς λόγοις σου. Καὶ γὰρ ὁ ἀπόστολος περὶ τῶν βεβαίων φησὶν· ἵνα ἦτε ἐρριζωμένοι καὶ τεθεμελιωμένοι τῇ πίστει. //</p> <p>[οὐχ ἀπλῶς δὲ πεπιστευμένων εἶπεν, ἀλλὰ πεπληροφορημένων, τὸ ἀπαράβατον τοῖς λεγομένοις μαρτυρῶν. (Catena Frag. 1b, Rauer 227).] //</p> <p>(15) Οὐδὲν γὰρ οὕτως πληροφορεῖ ὡς νοῦς καὶ λόγος· ὅψις γὰρ οὐ πληροφορεῖ, ἐπεὶ οὐκ ἀπο σημείων καὶ τεράτων ὁρατῶν κρίνεται τὰ πράγματα, ἀλλὰ λόγῳ κρίνεται, ποῖα τὰ ἀληθῆ καὶ ποῖα τὰ ψευδῆ. //</p> <p>[πραγμάτων δέ φησιν, ἐπειδήπερ οὐ κατὰ</p>	<p>(11) <i>Affectum suum Lucas indicat ex sermone, quo ait: In nobis manifestissime sunt ostensae, id est, πεπληροφορημένων (quod uno uerbo Latinus sermo non explicat).</i> [11.1] Certa enim fide et ratione cognouerat, neque in aliquo fluctuabat, utrum ita esset, an aliter. Hoc autem illis euenit, qui fidelissime crediderunt, et id quod propheta obsecrat, consecuti sunt, et dicunt: <i>Confirma me in sermonibus tuis</i>; unde et Apostolus de his qui erant firmi, atque robusti, ait: <i>Ut sitis radicati et fundati in fide</i>. Si quis enim radicans in fide est atque fundatus, [12'] licet tempestas fuerit exorta, licet uenti flauerint, licet se imber effuderit, (14) non conuelletur, nec corruiet, quia <i>super petram</i> aedificium solida mole fundatum est. (15) Nec putemus</p>
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<p><i>quae in nobis conpletae sunt,</i> <b>(15) quoniam non signis et prodigiis, sed uerbo uera et falsa discriminant qui salutaria domini gesta describunt uel qui animum mirabilibus eius intendunt.</b> quid enim tam rationabile quam ut credas, cum legis ea gesta quae supra hominem sunt, potioris esse naturae, at uero cum legis ea quae sunt mortalia, suscepti credas esse corporis passiones? ita <b>(15) uerbo atque ratione, non signis fides nostra fundatur.</b></p>	<p>φαντασίαν κατὰ τοὺς τῶν αἱρετικῶν παῖδας ἐδραματούργησεν Ἰησοῦς τὴν ἔνσαρκον αὐτοῦ παρουσίαν, ἀλλὰ τυγχάνων ἀλήθεια πρὸς ἀλήθειαν ἐνήργησε τὰ πράγματα. (Catena Frag. 1c, Rauer 227).]</p>	<p><b>oculis istis carnalibus firmitatem fidei dari, quam mens et ratio tribuit. Infideles quique credant signis, atque portentis, quae humana acies contuetur. Fidelis uero et prudens atque robustus rationem sequatur et uerbum, et sic diiudicet, quid uerum quidue falsum sit.</b></p>
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*Discussion of the parallel texts*

A close reading of the columns above reveals a pattern similar to the methodology Ambrose used in composing his exposition of the Psalms. Short phrases appear to be translated virtually verbatim from Origen: parallels can be identified both in the Greek fragments as well as in Jerome’s translation. For the most part, however, the Ambrosian text seems to be more freely translated or paraphrased, one of the characteristics derided by Jerome. Both Jerome and Ambrose include text that is not extant in the Greek fragments. In some cases, these run in parallel, suggesting that the Greek tradition is truncated and that both Latin authors are referring to a section of Origen that is no longer extant. For example, sections annotated in the columns above as 5, 7, 9, 12, and 15 exist in both Ambrose and Jerome, but not in the Greek fragments. It is possible that Jerome imitated Ambrose at those points, but this is unlikely given his statement in his prologue of his intention to translate Origen’s Greek as faithfully as possible. In places, Jerome translates sections of Origen that have no parallel in Ambrose. One such extended section is noted above with the designation [11.1].

Overall, Ambrose adds more commentary than is paralleled in Jerome's translation, let alone the fragments of Origen. The most obvious explanation is that these sections represent Ambrose's own thought. For example, the very first section, marked **(1)**, is pithy in both Origen and Jerome; Ambrose takes nearly three times as long to say the same thing, weaving a few phrases from Origen into his own ideas. Some of Ambrose's text expands an idea while on other occasions he injects paraenesis, in keeping with the homiletic origin of this commentary. It is possible that the original form of Origen's text, as homily, included more of this sort of exhortation, which Jerome omitted. Given the lack of evidence and the clear examples of the way in which Ambrose added significantly to Basil's Homily on Psalm 1, the former hypothesis that these additions are Ambrosian fits more convincingly.

The opening sentences in each column above reveal the same pattern. Jerome's translation closely follows the text as found in the catena fragment, suggesting that this fragment is likely to be authentic. The only departure is that Jerome moves the reference to *exercitatissimis trapezitis* (οἱ δόκιμοι τραπεζίται) to the previous clause and turns it into a simile. Jerome keeps the Greek noun in transliteration, a frequent habit of his when translating. Ambrose, on the other hand, refers to the money-handlers twice: the first time, like Jerome, with the addition of *quasi*, the second without. The bishop translates the phrase as *bonus nummularius* rather than using the Greek term. A few sentences in Jerome's text that are not in the fragments could be understood either as his own clarifications (as when he offers multiple translations for πεπληροφορημένων) or as his translation of Greek text no longer extant. The latter explanation fits the majority of the extra sentences in Jerome. In Ambrose, however, there are so many interpolated sentences that his use of Origen's homily could be characterised as an outline which he amplifies in his own way. As the additions in Ambrose do not always correspond to those in Jerome, the possibilities are either that Ambrose was working from a longer or possibly augmented text of Origen, or, far more likely, that he had much of his own to say to those gathered in the basilica in Milan.

### *Ambrosian transformation*

In addition to the additional material throughout Ambrose's commentary on Luke 1:1, a few passages stand out as inversions of what probably was Origen's text, if Jerome is translating accurately. Jerome makes use of the image of a storm beating against a house with harsh winds and heavy rain, threatening to wipe it off its foundation (marked above as section **[12']**). Ambrose, by contrast, alters the weather metaphor and chooses to describe

rain in an agricultural metaphor drawn from Scripture, as God's grace poured out like rain to water a person (12).<sup>38</sup> In this context, the person is specifically identified as a writer, and probably one of the four evangelists, in keeping with the commentary's discussion of true and false gospel writers. Later, in a section also marked (12), Ambrose refers to rain as the Gospel which enables a believer to stand steadfast. Earlier, in the section labelled (10), Ambrose had pointed out that the heretical gospel writers could only 'try' (*conati sunt*) because they were devoid of the grace of God. Indeed, all three sources—Origen, Jerome, and Ambrose—refer to the gift of grace (*gratia*/χάρισμα) of discernment given to the Jews to sort out true from false prophets, and that the writers of the heretical gospels were without *gratia*/χάρισμα and thus could only 'try'. Ambrose amplifies this idea of grace further, highlighting its effect not just in the production of Scripture in the past, but also for the average person who listens to the reading of the Gospel. Thus the storm in Jerome (and perhaps Origen) that is a threat to faith becomes in Ambrose a nourishing rain that feeds faith. The transformation of this image is very likely to be based in the rite of baptism, as 'grace' (*gratia*) was frequently used as a term for baptism in the Latin Church from at least the fourth century.<sup>39</sup> Thus the connection that Ambrose makes between water and *gratia* is perhaps best understood as an expressive illustration of the idea of the grace of God poured out in baptism.

Part of the reason for this transformation thus could come from a greater emphasis on grace in Ambrose's preaching. Further, that grace could be interpreted as an association he sought to make for his audience to understand baptism as a stabilising foundation of faith for the believer. But a more technical rationale for the way in which Ambrose departs from Origen's homily at this point could derive from the way in which Origen, and Jerome in imitation, conflates two Pauline texts. Ambrose sidesteps the discussion of the text, perhaps because of the textual confusion: there is no mention of it in his commentary at the point marked as [11.1] in Origen and Jerome. Origen appears to conflate Ephesians 3:17 (ἐν ἀγάπῃ

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<sup>38</sup> Verses relating to water as both a God-provided element for agricultural growth and a metaphor for spiritual growth included Deuteronomy 32:2; Psalm 1:3, 72:6; Isaiah 44:3–4, 55:10–11; Hosea 10:12, Zechariah 10:1; Romans 5:5. The last may be the particular image Ambrose has in mind in this context.

<sup>39</sup> This can be observed readily in a number of Augustine's sermons in which he implores the catechumens to 'come to grace', i.e. to postpone baptism no longer. See, for example, Augustine, *Sermones ad populum* 97A.4 and 132.1–2.

ἐρριζωμένοι καὶ τεθεμελιωμένοι) and Colossians 1:23 (εἴ γε ἐπιμένετε τῇ πίστει τεθεμελιωμένοι καὶ ἐδραῖοι), resulting in the form ἵνα ᾗτε ἐρριζωμένοι καὶ τεθεμελιωμένοι τῇ πίστει. Alternatively, this may simply be an error of memory. For Origen and Jerome, the key to surviving the storms of life is thus being ‘rooted and grounded in faith’. Ambrose may not have totally abandoned Origen’s text, though, as he seems to have the idea from Ephesians 3:17 of ‘being rooted’ in mind when he transforms the metaphor of the storm into one of a more nourishing rain. For Ambrose, that rain pours out grace, making the writer be fruitful without effort, and in turn feeding the faith that allows the believer to be steadfast. The image then is of plants ‘rooted and grounded in love’, the full phrasing of Ephesians 3:17. In Origen and Jerome, the emphasis is instead on the role of *mens et ratio* (νοῦς καὶ λόγος) in producing steadfastness of faith. Some time after the imagery of the rain, at the conclusion of his exegesis of Luke 1:1, Ambrose works in the idea of the Word and Reason, *uerbo atque ratione*, stating that they provide a better foundation for faith than signs and wonders. Yet Ambrose makes it explicit in the preceding passages that it was grace which had brought them to that foundation.

### *Gospel text*

The text of Luke 1:1 as extracted from the passages of exegesis quoted above is as follows, along with the standard editions of the New Testament:

**Origen:** Πολλοὶ {μὲν οὖν} ἐπεχείρησαν ... περὶ τῶν πεπληροφορημένων ἐν ἡμῖν πραγμάτων ...

**Jerome** (translating Origen): *Quoniam quidem multi conati sunt ordinare narrationem de his rebus, quae manifestissime cognitae/confirmatae/ostensae sunt in nobis.*

**Ambrose:** *Quoniam multi conati sunt ordinare narrationem rerum quae in nobis completae sunt [uel quae in nobis redundant].*

**NA28:** Ἐπειδὴ περ πολλοὶ ἐπεχείρησαν ἀνατάξασθαι διήγησιν περὶ τῶν πεπληροφορημένων ἐν ἡμῖν πραγμάτων ...

**Vulgate:** *Quoniam quidem multi conati sunt ordinare narrationem, quae in nobis completae sunt, rerum ...*

It may seem surprising that Ambrose’s text of Luke 1:1 is closer to the form of this verse in Jerome’s revision of the Latin Gospels (later adopted as the Vulgate) than Jerome’s own citation here. Ambrose would have relied on a *Vetus Latina* gospel text when he preached on Luke: although it is just possible that he had a copy of Jerome’s revision of the Gospels by the time

he edited his his homilies, the textual affiliation of the commentary in general suggests that he did not refer to the Vulgate. Besides, Jerome's revision was based on an existing Old Latin tradition, and there is little difference between the majority of surviving Old Latin manuscripts and the Vulgate in the wording of this verse.<sup>40</sup>

The main differences in the Latin texts of Luke 1:1 above involve the participle *πεπληροφορημένων*. Jerome, who normally seems more mindful of his target language when translating, here appears to opt for a literal translation of the Greek text in the copy of Origen in front of him. He ends up with the periphrastic, and more awkward, Latin construction *de his rebus*; Ambrose has the simpler *rerum*. Furthermore, Jerome cannot make up his mind how to translate the core meaning of the troublesome participle. He ends up translating it three different ways: *de his rebus, quae manifestissime cognitae sunt in nobis*; *de his rebus, quae confirmatae sunt in nobis*; *in nobis manifestissime sunt ostensae*. He excuses his indecision by commenting parenthetically *quod uno verbo latinus sermo non explicat* ('which Latin speech does not express in a single word'). Ambrose consistently translates this participle as *rerum quae in nobis completae sunt*. He does hesitate slightly at one point, adding *uel quae in nobis redundant* as a gloss or expansion of the thought contained in *πεπληροφορημένων*. The irony is that, in striving to render Origen's words, Jerome seems to pay no attention to his Latin version of the Gospel of Luke completed perhaps five or so years earlier. The result makes for overly complicated Latin, especially compared to Ambrose's version. By 398, however, when Jerome composes the preface to his *Commentary on Matthew*, he cites Luke 1:1 with a text which, at least in modern editions, is much closer to what came to be known as the Vulgate.<sup>41</sup>

### The Anointing at Bethany (Luke 7:37–50)

There are two main reasons why the gospel accounts about the woman who anointed Jesus are difficult for the Church Fathers. First and foremost, the

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<sup>40</sup> For more detail on the Old Latin tradition and its relationship to Jerome's 'translation', see the discussion in H.A.G. Houghton, *The Latin New Testament: A Guide to its Early History, Texts, and Manuscripts*. Oxford: OUP, 2016, 31–5.

<sup>41</sup> Jerome, *Commentariorum in Matheum*, Prol. 1.2: *quoniam quidem multi conati sunt ordinare narrationem rerum quae in nobis completae sunt*. This commentary too relies heavily on Origen, although (ironically, given the discussion here) it is not presented as a translation; the preface, however, is Jerome's own work.

details in Matthew and Luke seem to contradict each other: does the woman anoint Jesus' feet or his head, or both?<sup>42</sup> Was Simon a Pharisee or a leper, or both? Did it happen at the beginning of Christ's ministry or in preparation for burial, or both? Second, the description of such an intimate anointing, particularly the more emotive narrative in Luke with its description of the weeping woman drying Jesus' feet with her hair and its reference to the woman as 'sinful', might be considered a bit too racy for a standard homily. Commentary on this passage is not extant in Jerome's translation of Origen's Lucan homilies: perhaps it was too controversial or challenging for him; or perhaps, more plausibly, he omitted it as the passage would be covered in exegesis elsewhere on the parallel Matthaean passage. A Greek fragment that seems to represent a portion of Origen's sermon on this pericope, however, survives in the catena tradition. As explained earlier, it is unclear whether Jerome possessed any text from Origen for this passage and whether or not the catena represents Origen's original text. What is clear is that Ambrose uses something quite similar to this catena, but also incorporates elements from other sources.

For this pericope, we therefore have Ambrose's commentary, a fragment which could be from Origen and silence from Jerome. Exegesis of the parallel text in Matthew, however, is found in Hilary of Poitiers' *Commentary on Matthew*. A close analysis of the data presented in the following table leads to the conclusion that Ambrose bases his exegesis on a combination of Origen (or at least the tradition represented in the catena fragment) and Hilary at this point:

Hilary, <i>In Matthaecum</i>	Origen, <i>Fragments in Luke</i>	Ambrose, <i>Exp. Luc.</i>
29.1–2 (SC 258:218–20)	(Fragment 113; GCS 49:273)	<i>Exp. Luc.</i> 6.14–16 (CCSL 14:179–80) <sup>43</sup>
cum autem esset Iesus in Bethania in domo Simonis leprosi, accessit ad eum mulier habens alabastrum	Ἡ μὲν οὖν τελειοτέρα ψυχὴ, καλῶς λατρεύσασα τῷ	hanc ergo mulierem inducit Matthaëus supra caput Christi effundentem unguentum et ideo forte

<sup>42</sup> Luke 7:36–50 and Matthew 26:6–13. Further parallels are located in Mark 14:3–9 (which is similar to the Matthaean version) and John 12:1–8 (which is similar to the Luke version, apart from the identification of the main person at table with Jesus as Lazarus).

<sup>43</sup> This is an extract from Ambrose's much longer exegesis of this passage, extending from 6.12–35.



<p>unguenti pretiosi, et reliqua. sub ipso tempore passionis non ex nihilo est, ut mulier unguentum pretiosum recumbentis domini capiti infuderit, dehinc ut discipuli irascerentur et dicerent uendi istud potius in usum pauperum debuisse, tum ut dominus et mulieris factum comprobaret et aeternam cum praedicatione euangelii operis huius esse memoriam sponderet, postremo ut post id Iudas ad uendendam salutem eius erumperet. mulier haec in praefiguratione gentium plebis est, quae in passione Christi gloriam deo reddidit. caput enim eius perunxit (caput autem Christi deus est). nam unguentum boni operis est fructus. et propter corporis curam mulierum sexui maxime gratum est. igitur omnem curam corporis sui et totum pretiosae mentis adfectum in honorem dei laudem que transfudit. sed discipuli fauore saluandi Israelis ut saepe numero commouentur: uendi hoc in suum pauperum debuisse. sed neque mulier haec uenale unguentum circumferebat et pauperes fidei indigos instinctu prophetico nuncupauerunt.</p>	<p>λόγῳ τοῦ θεοῦ, παρρησίαν ἔχει ἐπ' αὐτὴν ἐλθεῖν τὴν κεφαλὴν— κεφαλὴ δὲ Χριστοῦ ὁ θεός— ὥστε καταχέαι μύρον αὐτῆς καὶ εὐωδίαν τῇ δόξῃ τοῦ θεοῦ περιποιῆσαι· δοξάζεται γὰρ ὁ θεός διὰ τῆς εὐωδίας τοῦ βίου τῶν δικαίων. ἡ δὲ ἀτελεστέρα γυνὴ καὶ ψυχὴ περὶ τοὺς πόδας καὶ τὰ ταπεινότερα στρέφεται, ἥς ἐγγὺς ἐσμέν ἡμεῖς· οὐδὲ γὰρ μετενοήσαμεν ἀπὸ τῶν μαρτημάτων ἡμῶν· ποῦ ἡμῶν τὰ δάκρυα, ποῦ ὁ κλαυθμός, ἵνα κἂν παρὰ τοὺς πόδας Ἰησοῦ ἐλθεῖν δυνηθῶμεν; ἐπ' αὐτὴν γὰρ οὐπὼ δυνάμεθα φθάσαι τὴν</p>	<p>noluit dicere peccatricem; nam peccatrix secundum Lucam supra Christi pedes effudit unguentum. potest ergo non eadem esse, ne sibi contrarium euangelistae dixisse uideantur. potest etiam quaestio meriti et temporis diuersitate dissolui, ut adhuc illa peccatrix sit, iam ista perfectior. etsi enim personam non mutet ecclesia uel anima, tamen mutat profectum. itaque si constituas animam fideliter adpropinquantem deo, non peccatis turpibus et obscenis, sed pie seruientem dei uerbo, habentem immaculae fiduciam castitatis, aduertis quod ad ipsum Christi ascendit caput; caput autem Christi deus est et odorem meritorum spargit suorum. Christi enim bonus odor sumus deo; deum quippe honorat bonum fragrans odorem uita iustorum. si haec intellegas, uidebis hanc feminam, uidebis plane beatam, ubicumque praedicatum fuerit hoc euangelium, nominari nec eius umquam exolescere memoriam, eo quod supra caput Christi bonorum fragrantia morum iustorum que factorum effudit</p>
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<p>atque hanc gentium fidem emi potius ad salutem egeni huius populi debuisse. quibus dominus ait plurimum esse temporis, quo habere curam pauperum possent; ceterum non nisi ex praecepto suo salutem gentibus posse praestari quae se cum infuso mulieris huius unguento sint consepultae, quia regeneratio non nisi commortuis in baptismi professione redhibetur. et idcirco ubi praedicabitur hoc euangelium, narrabitur opus eius, quia, cessante Israel, euangelii gloria fide gentium praedicatur. qua aemulatione in Iudae persona Israel profanus accensus omni odio ad extinguendum nomen domini incitatur.</p>	<p>κεφαλὴν. ἀγαπητὸν δὲ μετὰ τὰ ἁμαρτήματα φέρειν μετανοίας εὐωδίαν, ἵνα τις δυνήθῃ ἢ δευτέρα εἶναι, ἢ τοὺς πόδας ἀλείφουσα, ἀλλὰ μὴ τὴν κεφαλὴν, τοῦτ' ἔστιν ἢ μὴ ἄπτομένη τῶν τελεωτέρων καὶ ὑψηλοτέρων, ἀλλὰ τῶν ἄκρων καὶ τελευταίων.</p>	<p>unguentum. qui accedit ad caput nescit extolli, sicut ille frustra inflatus mente carnis suae et non tenens caput. sed qui caput non tenet Christi uel pedes teneat, quia corpus unum copulatum et subministra- tum crescit in incrementum dei. altera est illa, uel persona altera uel profectu, quae propinqua nobis est; nondum enim peccatis nostris renuntiauimus. ubi sunt nostrae lacrimae, ubi gemitus, ubi fletus? uenite, adoremus et procidamus ante eum et ploremus ante dominum nostrum, qui fecit nos, ut saltem ad pedes Iesu uenire possimus. nondum enim possumus, peccator ad pedes, iustus ad caput.</p>
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Hilary summarises the Matthaean version for his audience, sticking closely to the text before offering several figurative interpretations. He reminds them that Jesus is at the home of Simon the Leper in Bethany, and that the anointing takes place just before the Crucifixion. The woman anoints Christ's head, which Hilary takes as representing divinity, since 'the head of Christ is God' (1 Cor. 11:3). The disciples, though, argue over the cost. Yet for Hilary the woman prefigures the Gentiles who would give glory to God in Christ's Passion, and her story would be retold wherever the Gospel is preached to the Gentiles. The poor whom 'you will always have' (Matt. 26:11) represent those who are poor in faith, unbelieving. The perfume stands for the fruit of good work.

Origen, in *Fragment* 113, appears to comment on both main versions of the story—the one in which the woman anoints Christ's head (as in Matthew and Mark) and the one in which she anoints his feet (as in Luke and John). The fragment, however, begins in the middle of his explanation without any context or orientation. He interprets each woman allegorically

and archotypically. The woman who stands at Christ’s head and breaks the jar of perfume represents ‘the more perfect soul (ἡ τελειότερα ψυχὴ), serving the word of God well’ and who has freedom (παρρησία) to walk up to the head. Here Origen makes the same connection as Hilary with the verse declaring that ‘the head of Christ is God’. Thus he explains that she who can approach Christ’s head has by implication clear access to God. On the other hand, the ‘less perfect woman—and soul’ must remain at Christ’s feet in humility. Origen shifts at this point into paraenesis: we, too, should be standing at Christ’s feet, rather than his head, weeping as the sinful woman does.

So how does Ambrose expound the text? In a preceding section, just after the lemma, he launches into his interpretation by acknowledging the challenge:

*Hoc loco plerique pati uidentur scrupulum, serere quaestiones, utrumnam uideantur euangelistae duo discordasse de fide an uero aliquam in diuersitate dictorum diuersitatem signare uoluissent mysterii.*

This passage seems to embarrass many readers. They raise questions. Are two evangelists contradicting each other? Or did they, by each telling the story differently, wish to underline a different mystery?<sup>44</sup>

He then launches into a basic explanation of the differences between the story in Matthew and in Luke, highlighting three main points of conflict:

Matthew	Luke
Perfumed oil poured on head	Perfumed oil poured on feet
‘Perhaps this is why he is unwilling to call her a sinner.’ [Head = good]	‘According to Luke, though, she is called a sinner’ [Feet = unclean]
Pharisees protest: concern over sin	Disciples protest: concern over money

Ambrose tries to reconcile the differences. He posits that perhaps these are two different women. Another possibility is that it is one woman but at different times, demonstrating the possibility of ‘progress in merit’:

*potest etiam quaestio meriti et diuersitate temporis dissolui ... uel persona altera uel profectu.*<sup>45</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Ambrose, *Exp. Luc.* 6.12.

Thus, when she was still a ‘sinner’, she stood at Jesus’ feet; once she has progressed and has become ‘more perfect’ (*perfectior*, *Exp. Luc.* 6.14), she could move to his head. This attempt at harmonisation reveals that Ambrose cannot make up his mind: is there one woman or are there two? More significantly, he has more of an inclination to solve the problem than is apparent in the fragment from Origen. Origen seems content to let the two women represent two states of the soul. Ambrose borrows the figurative exegesis, but still wants to figure out the facts behind the story. He devotes a lot more time to this, discussing the pericope in twenty-four chapters, compared to just two in Hilary.

Unable to decide how to resolve this conundrum, Ambrose shifts into high paraenetic *pathos*, thereby providing further evidence of the commentary’s homiletic origins in the basilica in Milan. Moreover, the exegesis here is about the right length for a sermon but, perhaps, too long for a commentary which, at that time, typical tended toward shorter, pithier exegesis. This paraenesis echoes the catena fragment of Origen, in which he asks his audience: ποῦ ἡμῶν τὰ δάκρυα, ποῦ ὁ κλαυθμός; Ambrose, however, adds one more phrase to make it an even more emotional tricolon: *ubi sunt nostrae lacrimae, ubi gemitus, ubi fletus?*<sup>45</sup> The congregation is drawn into the scene, and their responsibility is made very clear. In the end, the hermeneutical turn is perhaps the only way to resolve the exegetical dilemma, at least in the homiletical *Sitz im Leben* for the texts of Origen and Ambrose.

## CONCLUSIONS

### 1. *Ambrosius Interpres*

Does Ambrose commit plagiarism? Does he appropriate Origen for his own purposes? Does he misunderstand Origen’s Greek? Or does he interpret Origen and recast his thought for a new pastoral context? In examining a couple of passages, a glimpse into the way he interacted with his sources has emerged. Ambrose’s approach involves the complex synthesis of a range of sources with his own thoughts and pastoral concerns. To rephrase the title of Thomas Graumann’s monograph on Ambrose’s *Commentary on Luke*, it could be said that the Bishop of Milan

<sup>45</sup> Ambrose, *Exp. Luc.* 6.14, 16.

<sup>46</sup> Origen, *Fragments in Luke*, Fragment 113 (GCS 49.273); Ambrose, *Exp. Luc.* 6.16 (CCSL 14.180). Of course, it is possible that Origen’s original phrase became truncated in the catena.

was *Ambrosius interpres*—a broker of exegetical ideas.<sup>47</sup> His specific methodology in incorporating a range of material remains a topic to be explored. Did he preach with commentaries or collections of homilies open? Or perhaps he spoke extemporaneously after reading a range of commentaries and then went over the transcripts with texts from Origen, Hilary and others in hand in order to form a commentary. The fact that he circles around and does not follow Origen's text in a purely linear fashion favours the latter explanation. Ambrose's approach still leaves plenty of room for his own interpretation.

## 2. Polemic

If plagiarism, or literary 'theft'—particularly of Greek texts by Latin authors—was so common in antiquity, and if Jerome himself borrowed from Origen without attribution, why would he make such a fuss over Ambrose's appropriation? Layton has proposed Jerome's fear of losing Roman patronage as one possible reason. On a broader scale, however, the accusation of plagiarism is a *topos* in ancient rhetoric, a form of intellectual one-upmanship. Perhaps Jerome was annoyed that Ambrose anticipated him in producing a commentary on Luke, just as he had with Didymus' *On the Holy Spirit*. Or perhaps he felt like picking a fight. Maybe he was truly frustrated to see how 'poorly' Ambrose translated Origen. But if that were the case, Jerome clearly misunderstood the nature of Ambrose's text: not a translation, not even really a pastiche, but more a patchwork in which the borrowed sections are quite obvious while the material on which they are sewn is also clearly seen and holds it all together.

## 3. *Nachleben*

Perhaps somewhat ironically, at least from Jerome's perspective, Ambrose became the authority on Luke in the Middle Ages. Partly this was by default, as the only other main ancient commentary was that of Origen, who began to be viewed as problematic around the end of the fourth century. Ambrose's *Expositio* was thus unchallenged as the main point of reference for further exposition and preaching on this Gospel. Despite Jerome's complaints and mocking, Ambrose's commentary carried the day.

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<sup>47</sup> Thomas Graumann, *Christus interpres: Die Einheit von Auslegung und Verkündigung in der Lukaseklärung des Ambrosius von Mailand*. PTS 41. Berlin & New York: de Gruyter, 1994.

The ascendancy and authority of Ambrose's Lucan homilies were further sealed by their incorporation into the Roman liturgy for Advent and Christmas. The faithful would thus hear his words read out alongside the passages of the Christmas story. For example, on the Fourth Sunday of Advent, congregations in the Western Church might hear the words of the Bishop of Milan describing Mary's visit to her cousin Elizabeth, from Book 2.<sup>48</sup> In a broader sense, beyond the *Commentary on Luke*, Ambrose becomes the key conduit of Origen's exegesis to the West, not only in his own works, but also through those exegetes directly influenced by him, in particular Augustine.

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<sup>48</sup> Ambrose, *Exp. Luc.* 2.19, 22–3, 26–7. Some contemporary versions of the Divine Office still maintain this tradition, e.g.: <http://divineoffice.org/1221-or/#sthash.sMfgtYoU.dpbs> (last accessed on 25 February 2016).